

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 HA-05 IO-13 SSM-03 CIAE-00
DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5768
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 5622

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV MOPS LE IS PLO
SUBJ: ISRAELI AIR RAIDS IN SOUTH LEBANON

1. SUMMARY: AFTER SEVERAL DAYS OF INCREASED FIGHTING IN
SOUTH LEBANON, INCLUDING CHRISTIAN-PALESTINIAN ARTILLERY DUELS
WITH DIRECT ISRAELI SUPPORT OF LATTER AND PALESTINIAN ROCKET
ATTACKS AGAINST ISRAEL, ISRAELIS BOMBARDED SOUTH LEBANON WITH
ARTILLERY NOVEMBER 8 AND LAUNCHED MASSIVE AIR STRIKES NOVEMBER
9 ON SEVERAL PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS, OTHER CLAIMED
PALESTINIAN MILITARY TARGETS AND SEVERAL LEBANESE POPULATION
CENTERS, KILLING AND WOUNDING OVER 100, MOSTLY LEBANESE
ACCORDING TO LOCAL SOURCES. LEBANESE GOVERNMENT'S REACTION
HAS BEEN MUTED. LEBANESE POLITICAL REACTIONS HAVE VARIED
ACCORDING TO POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES, WITH CHRISTIAN RIGHTISTS
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IN PARTICULAR, BUT MOSLEMS AS WELL, SUGGESTING
PALESTINIANS BROUGHT AIR STRIKES ON THEMSELVES.
PALESTINIAN, GOL AND FOREIGN PRESS POINT OUT THAT MOST
VICTIMS ARE CIVILIANS. PALESTINIANS CRITICIZE THE USG
STAND, AND WARN THAT ISRAELIS MAY BE PLANNING GROUND
ATTACK AS WELL. END SUMMARY.

2. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS. THE MOST SERIOUS FIGHTING SINCE THE SEPTEMBER ISRAELI INTERVENTION ERUPTED IN SOUTH LEBANON OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS. AS REPORTED BY THE BEIRUT PRESS AND OTHER LOCAL SOURCES, THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS HAS BEEN AS FOLLOWS:

A. ON NOVEMBER 4, 5 AND 6 THERE WERE HEAVY ARTILLERY DUELS BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIANS/ LEBANESE LEFTISTS, WITH THE ISRAELIS PROVIDING DIRECT ARTILLERY SUPPORT TO THE CHRISTIANS. ON NOVEMBER 6, THREE ROCKETS WERE FIRED ON THE ISRAELI TOWN OF NAHARIYYAH AND TWO PEOPLE KILLED. THE PDFLP WAS RESPONSIBLE, ACCORDING TO A KNOWLEDGEABLE DATT SOURCE.

B. ON NOVEMBER 8, THE ISRAELIS FIRED ARTILLERY ON THE TOWNS OF NABATIYAH, TAYYIBAH, AND TYR, AS WELL AS ON THE REFUGEE CAMPS OF RASHIDIEH AND BURJ EL SHEMALI ON THE SOUTHERN OUTSKIRTS OF TYR, WHICH TOGETHER SHELTER NEARLY 22,000 REFUGEES. THE SAME DAY, NAHARIYYAH WAS AGAIN ROCKETED AND ONE ADDITIONAL PERSON WAS KILLED. THE PDFLP WAS AGAIN RESPONSIBLE, ACCORDING TO THE SAME DATT SOURCE, ALTHOUGH THE NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT SAYS FATAH TAKES CREDIT FOR IT.

C. ON NOVEMBER 9, ISRAELI PHANTOMS AND MIRAGES LAUNCHED AIR STRIKES IN THE WESTERN SECTOR OF SOUTH LEBANON. ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY, "50 BODIES HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED AND THE NUMBER CONFIDENTIAL

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OF CASUALTIES IS EXPECTED TO RISE TO 110." AN OFFICIAL IN SIDON WAS QUOTED AS SAYING 80 PERCENT OF THE VICTIMS WERE CIVILIANS; AND DATT SOURCE CLAIMS ONLY 10 PERCENT OF TOTAL WERE ACTUALLY PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS.

D. ALTHOUGH LOCAL SOURCES HAVE NOT PROVIDED A COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF TARGETS HIT, PRESS REPORTS SAID AT LEAST 48 OF THE DEAD WERE FROM THE VILLAGE OF AL IZZIYAH, ABOUT SIX MILES NORTH OF THE BORDER. REUTERS AND ASSOCIATED PRESS REPORT NOT ONE OF THE 30 HOUSES IN THE VILLAGE WAS LEFT STANDING. AP ALSO QUOTED A "WEEPING TEENAGE MOTHER CRADLING AN INFANT IN HER ARMS" AS SAYING THAT "WE ARE ALL LEBANESE HERE; THERE ARE NO GUERILLAS AMONG US." LOCAL REPORTERS ALSO SAID THE VILLAGE OF AL HINNIYAH, NEAR AL IZZIYAH, WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED.

E. ALSO ACCORDING TO AP, REPORTERS ON THE SCENE SAID THAT THEY HAD SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF GUERILLA POSITIONS IN EITHER AL IZZIYAH OR BURJ EL SHEMALI. LAF INTELLIGENCE SOURCE TOLD DATT THAT THE IRAQI-BACKED GENERAL COMMAND CLAIMED THEIR FORCES HAD PULLED OUT OF AL IZZIYAH SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE STRIKE AND IDF INTELLIGENCE WAS NOT UP TO DATE. THEY REPORTEDLY

OBSERVED "WOMEN WAILING HYSTERICALLY, PULLING THEIR HAIR, AND TEARING THEIR CLOTHES" OUTSIDE THE INFIRMARY AT BURJ EL SHEMALI, WHERE THE BODIES OF NINE CHILDREN, AGED BETWEEN 5 AND 12, WERE OBSERVED. ONE LADY WAS QUOTED AS SAYING "WHY HAVE THEY KILLED OUR INFANT BABIES? THE WRATH OF GOD ON THE CURSED ISRAELI PILOTS."

3. LEBANESE REACTION:

A. GOL REACTION TO ISRAELI AIR RAID HAS BEEN SURPRISINGLY MUTED. LATE NOVEMBER 9, PRESIDENT SARKIS AND FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED IDEA OF BRINGING ISSUE TO UN SECURITY COUNCIL, ON GROUNDS THAT UPSHOT WOULD PROBABLY BE A "BALANCED" RESOLUTION EQUALLY CRITICAL OF PALESTINIANS AND CONFIDENTIAL

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ISRAELIS, WHICH PALESTINIANS WOULD THEN USE TO PROVE THEIR OWN INNOCENCE. BEIRUT PRESS NOVEMBER 10 HOWEVER REPORTS THAT GOL WILL INFORM SECURITY COUNCIL OF EVENTS. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS MADE DECLARATION TO PRESS LATE NOVEMBER 9 WHICH FOCUSED ON DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS CONCERNING THE SOUTH AND ALLUDED TO NUMBER OF INNOCENT CIVILIAN VICTIMS. HE DID NOT DIRECTLY ATTACK ISRAELI ACTION EXCEPT BY ALLUSION TO GOL NEED FOR "THE COOPERATION OF CERTAIN FRIENDLY COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE CONDEMNED THE ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND STIGMATIZED THE LATEST ISRAELI ATTACK." OFFICIAL GOL "NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY" BULLETIN OF NOVEMBER 9 GIVES FACTUAL ACCOUNT OF ISRAELI ATTACKS AND REPORTS NUMBERS OF VICTIMS, AND IN REPORT ON WEEKLY CABINET MEETING ALLUDES IN PASSING TO "BLOODY AGGRESSION BY ISRAELI FORCES."

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5769
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
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B. POLITICAL CIRCLES WERE MORE OUTSPOKEN. IKE
NOVEMBER 10 SAYS "THE LEBANESE POLITICAL SCENE WAS
BOILING WITH VIOLENT REACTIONS TO THE ISRAELI ATTACK."
ON THE RIGHT, PHALANGE PARTY LEADER AND SPOKESMAN PIERRE
GEMAYEL BLAMED EPISODE ON FAILURE OF PALESTINIANS TO
WITHDRAW FROM SOUTH IN ACCORDANCE WITH SHTAURA
AGREEMENT: "THE ALIEN ARMED ELEMENTS (THE
PALESTINIANS) WERE NOT CONTENT WITH IGNORING THE
AGREEMENT; THEY DELIBERATELY TRIED TO PROVOKE AN ISRAELI
ATTACK." CAMILLE CHAMOUN CALLED AIR RAIDS A
"MINI-TRAGEDY," AND SAID GREATER TRAGEDIES LIE AHEAD
IF PALESTINIANS DO NOT WITHDRAW FROM THE SOUTH.
RIGHTIST LE REVEIL NOVEMBER 10, REPORTING ON MEETING OF
LEADERS OF "LEBANESE FRONT," SAID AN ISRAELI
OCCUPATION OF THE SOUTH WAS CONSIDERED UNLIKELY
BECAUSE OF INTERNATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES. HOUSE SPEAKER
KAMEL ASSAD, ACCORDING TO NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY NOVEMBER
9, SAID THAT "ISRAEL MUST NOT BE GIVEN ANY EXCUSE TO
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MAKE OF SOUTH LEBANON A TIME BOMB." HE ARGUED THAT
ESCALATION SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS SOURCE OF PESSIMISM,
SINCE IT INDICATES THAT THERE INDEED EXISTS A "MARCH
OF PEACE IN LEBANON." HE SAID HE STILL HOPED SYRIAN-
LEBANESE COOPERATION ON SOUTH WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL AND
THAT PALESTINIANS WOULD BE "RESPONSIVE."

C. PARLIAMENTARY COMMENTARY VARIED FROM ABDULLATIF
ZAIN: "IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO IMPLEMENT ANY
AGREEMENT IN THE SOUTH," TO MUNIR ABU FADEL: "THE
ISRAELI ATTACK IS THE BEGINNING OF A BID TO TAKE OVER
THE WATERS OF THE LITANI." PIERRE DAKKASH ASKED, WHEN
WERE THE ARABS GOING TO COME TO THE DEFENSE OF LEBANON?
BUTROS HARB WONDERED WHY ESCALATION CAME JUST AS GOL
AND SYRIAN GOVERNMENT WERE HOLDING MEETINGS IN DAMASCUS.

4. PALESTINIAN REACTION:

A. THE PALESTINIANS HAVE DENIED THAT ANY MILITARY
TARGETS WERE STRUCK. ABU JIHAD, THE REGIONAL

PALESTINIAN MILITARY COMMANDER, SAID THAT "NOT A SINGLE GUERRILLA HAS BEEN KILLED AND MOST OF THE CASUALTIES ARE WOMEN AND CHILDREN," ACCORDING TO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY IKA.

B. THE PALESTINIANS HAVE REACTED STRONGLY TO UNITED STATES STATEMENTS. THE PALESTINIAN NEWS AGENCY (Wafa) ON NOVEMBER 9 ACCUSED THE STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN OF TAKING A "GROTESQUELY BIASED STAND" AND CONTINUED THAT EVENTS IN THE SOUTH "ARE FURTHER PROOF, IF PROOF IS NEEDED, OF THE INDISSOLUBLE BONDS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND U.S. IMPERIALISM."

C. Wafa ALSO WARNED THAT ISRAEL MIGHT BE PREPARING A MAJOR GROUND INCURSION. IT SAID THAT ISRAEL WAS "REINFORCING AND CONCENTRATING VEHICLES AND ARMOR ALONG THE BORDER" AND MAY FOLLOW ITS AIR AND ARTILLERY
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ATTACKS WITH "A WIDE-SCALE GROUND ATTACK."

D. A PRESS TOUR OF DAMAGED VILLAGES HAS BEEN ORGANIZED FOR MORNING OF NOVEMBER 10 BY Fatah AND CONSIDERABLE FOREIGN PRESS COVERAGE LIKELY.

5. COMMENT: LEBANESE MEDIA ARE REPORTING EVENTS AS THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO LEARN THEM FROM THEIR SOURCES. THE GOVERNMENT, SURPRISINGLY, HAS NOT TAKEN OBVIOUS OPPORTUNITY TO LAMBLASTE ISRAELIS, PERHAPS OUT OF SIMPLE INEFFECTIVENESS, PERHAPS OUT OF A SINCERE EFFORT TO COOL THE SITUATION AND RENEW THE PEACE-MAKING PROCESS, AND PERHAPS OUT OF SOME UNSPOKEN SATISFACTION (PARALLELING LEBANESE FRONT SENTIMENT) THAT, FOLLOWING THEIR DILATORY TACTICS, THE PALESTINIANS HAVE GOTTEN A COMEUPPANCE, ALTHOUGH MOST OF CASUALTIES SEEM TO BE LEBANESE. THE TONE OF Wafa'S STATEMENTS SUGGEST THAT ISRAELI INTERVENTION HAS GREATLY INCREASED PALESTINIAN SUSPICION OF UNITED STATES INTENTIONS.

6. WE NOTED SURPRISING RADIO ISRAEL NEWS BROADCASTS EARLY NOVEMBER 10 ALLEGING THAT "DIPLOMATS AND JOURNALISTS IN BEIRUT" HAD CONFIRMED THAT TARGETS OF ISRAELI AIR RAIDS WERE STRICTLY MILITARY IN NATURE. WE KNOW OF NEITHER DIPLOMATS NOR JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE MADE SUCH A CLAIM, CERTAINLY NOT THIS EMBASSY, AND THE PRESS REPORTS CERTAINLY DO EMPHASIZE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES PARTICULARLY AT VILLAGE OF AL IZZIYAH, WHERE LEBANESE GENERALLY BELIEVE ONLY LEBANESE REFUGEES AND NOT PALESTINIANS) WERE PRESENT.
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Secure: OPEN
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Subject: ISRAELI AIR RAIDS IN SOUTH LEBANON
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To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/28c8a91d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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